

Weekly Police Beat for the week ending December 1, 2017

Phony Extortion Letter is the Latest Phishing Scam

Thieves want you to pay in bitcoin to keep your 'secret' safe

On Tuesday, November 21, 2017, a resident walked into the Village Hall and asked to speak to a police officer. The resident handed over a letter that he had received in an envelope with no return address; he said it was postmarked in Tennessee.

The typewritten letter was printed on two sides of a single page. The writer stated that he/she knew "about the secret you are keeping from your wife." The letter writer gave the recipient 2 options: 1) ignore the letter and then suffer the consequences of having his secret sent to his wife and her friends, or 2) pay \$3,500 in bitcoin (a decentralized digital currency enabling users to remain anonymous) to the letter writer as a "confidentiality fee." The letter did not specify what type of 'secret' would be divulged.

In addition to the extortion letter, the writer included a two-sided instruction sheet to explain how to use bitcoin.

Initially, the resident and his family laughed it off. After sleeping on it last night, the resident thought that the police ought to know about it in case others might receive such letters. The letter was obviously a 'phishing' effort to extort money from the recipient. This scam is somewhat unique in that it uses the old-fashioned U.S. mail to deliver a paper letter, then it urges the recipient to go high-tech and use bitcoin to pay the extortion fee.

Ignore these letters. This is merely another way that thieves have found to make money. If you receive such a letter, please call the Village Police Department and report it.

Tips to Prevent Thieves from Stealing Delivered Packages

Useful prevention measures will protect your purchases

It's the season when delivered packages rain down on doorsteps throughout the Village. Thieves know this, too, and they target neighborhoods like ours to steal packages soon after they've been delivered.

To reduce the chances that a package that you are expecting will be stolen, the Village Police Department advises you to consider the following:

- Have your shipper hold packages at their facility or store to be picked up later. Even after a package has been shipped and is on the way to your house, you can redirect it to be held at the shipper's distribution center using their online features.

- Have shipments sent to your office or another address (family member; neighbor) if you won't be home when the package will be delivered.
- Install a video doorbell. They alert you and send live video to your smart phone or tablet whenever someone comes to your door. Each video is saved to the cloud so that you can retrieve it later. You can also talk to the visitor from anywhere using the intercom feature in the device.
- At a minimum, sign up for text message updates; you will receive a message very soon after the item is dropped at your house. With that information, you can promptly bring the package inside to reduce the likelihood of theft.
- Call the Village Police Department (301-654-7300) immediately if you believe that a delivered package has been stolen.